



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release UPON RECEIPT

Soon great hordes of Great Lakes smelt will invade the streams of the Green Bay territory of Wisconsin and Michigan, says a release from the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior.

In the past few years, this fish has multiplied rapidly, and now supplies an immense quantity of protein food to augment the Nation's war food larder. Winter-caught smelt have been on our markets for some time, but now that the spring run has begun the supply will be greatly increased.

"In rivers such as the Oconto, Menominee, Pensaukee, Cedar, Ford, Day's, Escanaba, and even in the tiniest of water-courses," according to the Service, "smelt appear in great numbers to spawn and return to the lake. These fish run at night in one stream or another over a period of more than a month. During that time, the dark woods are illuminated by the fires and lanterns of the smelt dippers. Great numbers of people line the sides of the streams to dip out the slowly moving fish."

Small scoop nets are ordinarily used when fishing from the bank, but in larger streams some of the fishing is conducted with blanket nets or dip nets from boats or rafts anchored at spots where the smelt pass in greatest numbers. Where bridges are conveniently located, nets are lowered from them.

The "run" comes at different times in different streams. While the Green Bay territory produces more smelt than any other region, these fish are found in other areas as widely scattered as the western end of Lake Superior and the eastern end of Lake Erie. They run in many streams of the lower peninsula of Michigan, from both Lake Michigan and from Lake Huron. Perhaps 10,000,000 pounds is a normal harvest of these fish, with more than half coming from the Green Bay territory, extending from Green Bay, Wisconsin, to the region of Rapid River, Michigan, a distance of more than 100 miles.

"As the smelt harvest reaches its height, the fish are ordinarily sold at low prices, and are marketed widely, especially over the midwest and even to more distant regions. Smelt are now purchased, also, as an item to vary the diet at Army camps within easy access of areas where the fish are plentiful. In the face of shorter supplies of meat, local residents in these areas will probably be even more enthusiastic this year about catching smelt for their own use; and many families

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outside the immediate region areas will go down for a night's dipping to supply their table and perhaps fill a cold-storage locker for future use. In areas where smelt 'run' but are not fished, it is expected there will be a development of dipping both for home use and commercial sale."

A number of recipes for preparing smelt, as suggested after tests by food technologists at the Service's College Park Laboratory, are given below.

Pan-fried smelts, for example, make an excellent breakfast dish.

Pan-Fried Smelts

2 pounds smelt
1 tablespoon salt
1 cup water

1/2 cup flour and 1/2 cup corn meal
4 tablespoons of fat or drippings

Clean the smelts; salt and let stand for 5 to 10 minutes to absorb salt. Dip in water and roll in flour and corn meal. Melt fat in skillet and brown smelts on all sides in hot fat. Cover and steam for about eight minutes, or reduce heat and cook slowly, uncovered, until done. Serve hot with parsley and lemon

Broiled Smelts

Clean the smelts and wipe dry. Salt thoroughly on both sides and let stand for five minutes. Place in a hot, well-greased broiler and cook under the flame at moderate heat (375° F.) for ten to fifteen minutes. The skin surface should be covered with brown bubbles when done. Turn and cook the other side. Slip the broiled fish carefully onto a hot platter, pour on the drippings, garnish with cress or parsley and sliced lemon, and serve at once. Allow three to five smelts per person.

Baked Smelts

2 pounds smelts
2 tablespoons melted butter or other fat
2 tablespoons lemon juice

1 teaspoon minced onion
1/4 cup finely chopped parsley
1 tablespoon salt

Wipe the fish dry, salt thoroughly on both sides, and let stand for five minutes. To the melted fat add the lemon juice, minced onion, and salt. Dip each fish in this mixture and place in a greased shallow baking dish, and pour the surplus fat over the fish. Bake in a moderately hot oven, 350 to 375 degrees F. about fifteen minutes. If not sufficiently browned, put under the flame of the broiling oven. Sprinkle the parsley over the fish and serve from the dish.

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